

# Growth Opportunities

INFRASTRUCTURE UPGRADES AND A WELCOMING ATTITUDE MAKE COQUITLAM A TOP CHOICE FOR BUSINESSES LOOKING TO RELOCATE

A wide-angle photograph of a modern urban development. Several tall, multi-story apartment buildings with balconies and large windows are visible against a clear blue sky. In the foreground, there is a paved plaza area with a white pickup truck parked. A landscaped area with green grass, trees, and colorful flowers (yellow and orange) is in the lower right. A modern, low-rise building with large glass windows is visible in the middle ground.

Spirit Square and the Glen Pine Pavilion showcase Coquitlam's emerging city centre with its combination of residential and commercial opportunities and vibrant gathering places.

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS, business owners with a keen eye for opportunity have been gradually shifting the centre of gravity for business in the Lower Mainland. Investors and entrepreneurs are gravitating toward the rapidly growing city of Coquitlam, lured by affordable real estate and green field development opportunities, convenient road, rail and river transportation links, and a welcoming attitude to new business.

No longer a quiet bedroom community to Vancouver, bustling Coquitlam is a thriving metropolis with a population of 125,000 – a number predicted to nearly double in the next 20 years. Towering skyscrapers continue to push the skyline upward and add density to the city centre while growing family neighbourhoods stretch outward; the city saw record values of new development in 2011 and has even greater prospects for 2012.

Coquitlam is one of the fastest growing communities in the Lower Mainland >



An aerial view of the Port Mann Bridge under construction in November 2011.

along with Surrey, Langley and Abbotsford, and will soon be the only one of them reached from Vancouver via Highway 1 without crossing a bridge and paying a toll. Moreover, infrastructure upgrades stand to make Coquitlam even more accessible. “The Port Mann Bridge and Highway 1 improvements, the new King Edward overpass and the expansion of the SkyTrain to Coquitlam with the Evergreen Line – these are all real game changers,” says Mayor Richard Stewart. “Coquitlam is poised at this moment in its history to reach enormous heights.”

According to Stewart, the Pacific Reach and United Boulevard area is already receiving a lot of attention from investors. Currently home to big-box retail, manufacturing, warehousing and industrial operations, this moderately developed area is Coquitlam’s prime territory for job creation. “A year from now, that area will truly be 30 minutes from anywhere in the Lower Mainland with connections by water, rail and highway in every direction.”

Stewart calls it “a courageous decision” to close King Edward Street for three months last fall in order to replace the always-congested underpass with a brand-new overpass spanning the freeway and railway – and it’s already paying off. “I had more potential

**The Port Mann Bridge and Highway 1 improvements, the new King Edward overpass and the expansion of the SkyTrain to Coquitlam with the Evergreen Line – these are all real game changers. Coquitlam is poised at this moment in its history to reach enormous heights.**

– Richard Stewart, Coquitlam Mayor

# Coquitlam

## Invest, Innovate, Grow



Coquitlam is one of the fastest growing communities in British Columbia. Our City offers:

- ❖ Proximity to the Metro Vancouver, US and Asian markets
- ❖ Access to major transportation corridors and networks
- ❖ Transportation infrastructure improvements like the Hwy 1 / Port Mann Bridge and Evergreen Line projects
- ❖ A large, skilled and highly educated labour force
- ❖ Diverse recreation, arts and culture, housing and education opportunities
- ❖ An open, accessible and progressive municipal government

We invite you to contact us to learn more about the advantages Coquitlam has to offer.

### Economic Development

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investors for that area in my office in the month after King Edward reopened than in the three years before.”

Business owners and investors are also eyeing the future Evergreen Line corridor, a project scheduled to break ground this year. On the books for more than 20 years, the long-awaited SkyTrain expansion will finally link Coquitlam to Vancouver via a world-class rapid-transit system.

Such a dramatic improvement in the flow of people through the city promises a boost in pedestrian traffic for Coquitlam’s City Centre, and, thanks to master city planning dating back to the community’s rural beginnings, the city is ready for it. “That’s one of the advantages of a planned design: you’re able to manage traffic, design streetscapes that promote walkability and accommodate a diverse population, from young families to students and seniors,” explains Stewart. “We designed our city centre to be transit-oriented, pedestrian-friendly and commercially vibrant. The only thing missing was the rapid-transit connection, and that’s now coming to fruition.”

“We’ll see City Centre become very



**Top: A panoramic view of Coquitlam’s city centre, Lafarge Lake and Douglas College.**  
**Above: Coquitlam Centre has several entrances, including this attractive access point.**

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## IMPROVING ACCESS TO UNITED BOULEVARD

BOASTING 18 FURNITURE STORES ALONG a one-kilometre stretch of road, “United Boulevard has been a kind of hidden jewel for shopping in the Lower Mainland,” says Michael Hind, executive director of the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce. Though now with improved access from all directions, he doesn’t expect it to remain “hidden” for long. “It’s a very dynamic place to come. There’s a great selection of furniture shops along this road, and there’s really something for everyone’s budget. Plus you can hit a few balls at the driving range at Eaglequest Golf centre, or head to the casino for dinner and a show.”

Thanks to the new King Edward Street overpass that opened in November 2011, drivers experience a lot less congestion and shorter commutes when accessing the businesses along United Boulevard from Lougheed Highway and Maillardville. It’s also been a boon to pedestrians and cyclists, who now enjoy a dedicated four-metre-wide path across the overpass.

“We understand how challenging the construction period was for the businesses and residents in that area, and we certainly appreciate their patience,” says Mayor Richard Stewart. “In the end, these infrastructure upgrades are an investment in our future and create opportunities that benefit our community today, while supporting and energizing future growth.” □



This aerial view shows the recently opened King Edward overpass.

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vibrant – very much the centre of the city,” adds Michael Hind, executive director of the Tri-Cities Chamber of Commerce. “It’s been a city without a real hub centre, and though that’s been changing, this will solidify it even more. I foresee great opportunities for retail and hotels in that part of town.”

While Hind acknowledges that Coquitlam’s business community has found transportation challenges to be limiting in the past, “the City has recognized that and is actively working with the Chamber of Commerce to promote and enhance the business climate.”

And the City’s efforts aren’t limited to infrastructure improvements. “I want us to make Coquitlam the easiest place to create a job and the easiest place to do business,” says Stewart, “and we’re partway down that path. We’ve got more to do, but we’ve certainly embraced a great many initiatives to ensure jobs and economic development and business opportunities are welcomed in Coquitlam.”

One such initiative has been to review thousands of community bylaws, dropping outdated rules and regulations and simplifying others. New regulations have been adopted to welcome and promote the growth of home-based businesses. “We’ve

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also streamlined the reasoning behind business-application approvals, so staff can make decisions faster and can look for ways they can say 'yes' as opposed to seeing the rules as barriers," explains Stewart. "We've re-conceptualized the regulations to function as steps through which we can guide a business to successful job creation in our community."

Speaking as a long-time member of the business community with plans for further development that will put the revised regulations to the test, "we're pretty happy about the

new streamlined approval process," says Geoff Nagle, director, development Western Canada, for Morguard Investments Ltd.

"Morguard works nationwide, and Coquitlam is high on our list of cities to invest in and who are welcoming to business opportunities," explains Nagle. "It's a refreshing experience to have proactive approaches to business by both City staff and politicians – too many cities just sit back and watch."

Morguard owns Coquitlam Centre, the 918,000-square-foot shopping mall that anchors City Centre. Morguard purchased

## A PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY

ACCESSIBLE, AFFORDABLE AND RICH with opportunity, Coquitlam provides incredible and unique appeal for investors looking for all the things that make businesses successful and efficient. One such business is Canstar Restorations. "Like most companies, we employ people in many roles and at many levels," says company president Jay Dargatz. "An essential component in fulfilling our culture of respect was locating our operations within a safe and healthy community that offers affordable living and excellent community services for young families."

**HOUSING** Options range from modern urban condos to executive homes on spacious lots, and with single-family homes selling at about one-third of the price of comparable properties on Vancouver's west side, the homebuyer's dollar goes a lot further in Coquitlam.

**EDUCATION** Coquitlam's school district serves more than 30,000 students – making it the third largest in B.C. – and has the largest international education program in Canada. Coquitlam College and the David Lam Campus of Douglas College together serve more than 6,000 full-time post-secondary students in Coquitlam.

**RECREATION** The award-winning \$50-million Poirier Sports and Leisure Complex upgrade is the most recent City investment in an expanding network of civic facilities dedicated to recreation, including Town Centre Park, City Centre Aquatic Centre and the rebuilt Chimo Pool. Residents also enjoy easy access to lakes, an extensive network of trails that blanket the city and thousands of hectares of natural park areas.

**ARTS AND CULTURE** Place des Arts and the Evergreen Cultural Centre host hundreds of presentations and programs for theatre, music, dance and art annually, and Coquitlam's City Centre public library is set to reopen in a new and expanded location this year. In 2009, Coquitlam was designated a Cultural Capital of Canada in recognition of the contribution of culture to the community's identity, quality of life and economic development. □



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## CITY OF COQUITLAM



**Above: Mayor Richard Stewart and the City of Coquitlam's manager of ICT, Rick Adams, discuss the benefits of QNet.**

**Right: Mahler Industries is a leading provider of CNC precision-machined components. This employee is working with a CNC Turning Centre.**



the 59-acre site when it was first developed more than 20 years ago, and has watched the area evolve from quasi-rural land adjacent to single-family homes to a busy hub surrounded by 30-storey towers.

Now at the nexus of a West Coast Express train station, a major bus station and what will be an Evergreen Line SkyTrain station, Nagle is expecting to see substantial growth in northeast Coquitlam in the next few years. "With the expected increase of traffic, we're looking at densifying the site through expansion of retail and the addition of mixed-use space for residential and offices – everything one would expect for an emerging downtown core."

Businesses setting up shop in Coquitlam can also benefit from what may be the city's biggest hidden advantage: a dark fibre optic network spanning 60 kilometres throughout the city. Originally installed in the late 1990s for the purpose of co-ordinating traffic signals, a progressive City Council

ordered the laying of additional fibre in anticipation of future needs. Beginning in 2003, the City began connecting its civic buildings to improve the quality and reduce the cost of its telecommunications services. Taking the idea one step further, the City then established QNet as a unique utility for residents and businesses in Coquitlam, allowing them to connect to the network and enjoy virtually unlimited connectivity and bandwidth.

As the first city in North America to launch a dark fibre commercial enterprise, Coquitlam has proven itself to be truly innovative and forward-thinking. "We're not trying to make a profit at it," says Stewart. "We just want to offer a unique competitive advantage to businesses in Coquitlam."

While QNet has an obvious appeal to telecommunications and technology-based industry as well as telecommuters, Stewart points out that every business, whether or not it considers itself high-tech, can benefit



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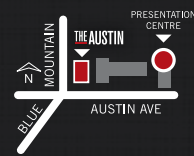
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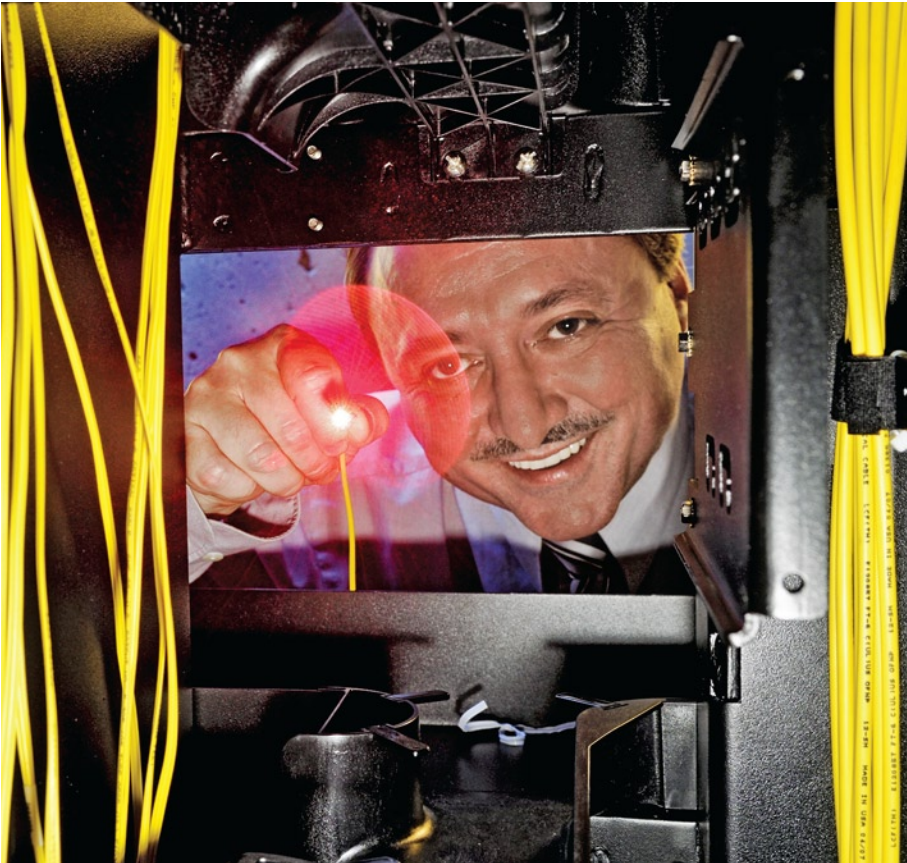


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**Left: The City of Coquitlam's manager of ICT, Rick Adams, explores the world of QNet.**  
**Above: Employees build circuit boards to support Ampco Manufacturers range of products and durable graphics.**

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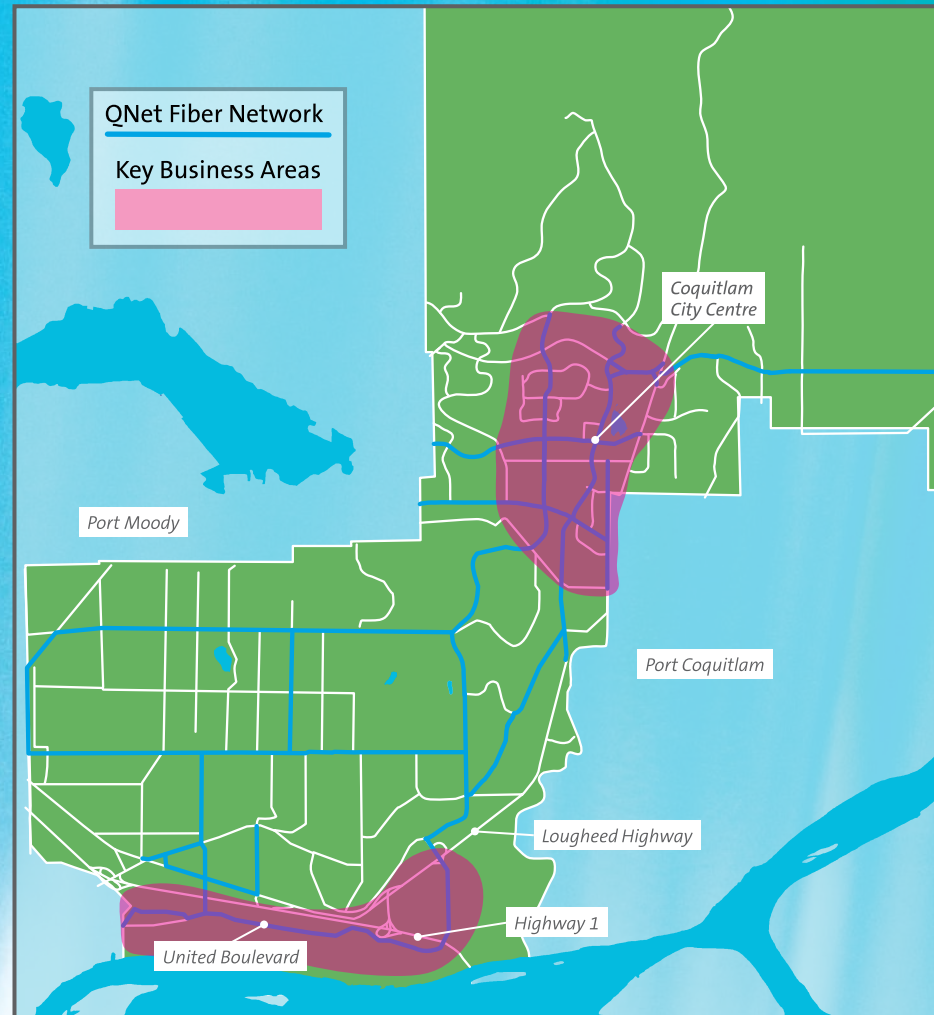
“It’s important to have organizations like the City of Coquitlam develop these unassociated, unencumbered networks. It allows for a competitive scenario,” says Bruce Sanderson, president of Uniserve, a national telecommunications company based in B.C. that has been operating on QNet for the last year and a half. “Before, if we wanted to deliver our Internet service to a business in Coquitlam, we would have to go through the traditional incumbent provider’s network. With QNet, we can connect to them directly and offer a more competitive price point.”

And such unique advantages to local business owners, notes Stewart – combined with citywide infrastructure investments, robust economic growth, an innovative business community and an attractive quality of life – make for plentiful investment opportunities throughout Coquitlam. ■

*This promotional feature was prepared for the City of Coquitlam by BCBusiness magazine’s Special Advertising Features Dept. Writer: Tiffany Sloan. For information, contact VP of corporate features John Cochran at 604-299-7311. Email: [jcochrane@canadawide.com](mailto:jcochrane@canadawide.com)*

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